Study shows kilos return fast after people end use of weight-loss drugs

PARIS: When people stop taking the new generation of weight-loss drugs, they pile back on the kilos four times faster than they would after ending diet and exercise regimes, new research found on Thursday.

But this was mostly because they lost so much weight in the first place, according to the British researchers who conducted the largest and most up-to-date review of the subject.

A new generation of appetite-suppressing, injectable drugs called GLP-1 agonists has become immensely popular in the last few years, transforming the treatment for obesity and diabetes in many countries.

They have been found to help people lose between 15-20 percent of their body weight.

"This all appears to be a good news story," said Susan Jebb, a public health nutrition scientist at Oxford university and co-author of a new BMJ study.

However, recent data has suggested that "around half of people discontinue these medications within a year," she told a press conference.

This might be because of common side effects such as nausea or the price — these drugs can cost over $1,000 a month in the US.

So the researchers reviewed 37 studies looking at ceasing different weight-loss drugs, finding that participants regained around 0.4 kilograms a month.

Six of the clinical trials involved semaglutide — the ingredient used in Novo Nordisk's brands Ozempic and Wegovy — and tirzepatide used for Eli Lilly's Mounjaro and Zepbound.

While taking these two drugs, the trial participants lost an average of nearly 15 kilograms.

However, after stopping the medication, they regained 10 kilograms within a year, which was the longest follow-up period available for these relatively new drugs.

The researchers projected that the participants would return to their original weight in 18 months.

Measurements of heart health, including blood pressure and cholesterol levels, also returned to their original levels after 1.4 years.

People who were instead put on programmes that included diet and exercise — but not drugs — lost significantly less weight. However, it took an average of four years for them to regain their lost kilos.

This meant that people taking the drugs regained their weight four times faster.

'Starting point, not a cure'

"Greater weight loss tends to result in faster weight regain," lead study author Sam West of Oxford University explained.

But separate analysis showed that weight gain was "consistently faster after medication, regardless of the amount of weight lost in the first place," he added.

This could be because people who have learned to eat more healthily and exercise more often continue to do so even as they regain weight.

Jebb emphasised that GLP-1 drugs "are a really valuable tool in obesity treatment — but obesity is a chronic relapsing condition."

"One would expect that these treatments need to be continued for life, just in the same way as blood pressure medication," Jebb said.

If this was the case, it would impact how national health systems judge whether these drugs are cost-effective, the researchers emphasised.

"This new data makes it clear they are a starting point, not a cure," said Garron Dodd, a metabolic neuroscience researcher at the University of Melbourne, not involved in the study.

"Sustainable treatment will likely require combination approaches, longer-term strategies, and therapies that reshape how the brain interprets energy balance, not just how much people eat," he said.—AFP

Google, AI startup agree to settle suits involving teen suicide

SAN FRANCISCO: Google and startup Character.AI have settled lawsuits filed by families accusing artificial intelligence chatbots of harming minors, including contributing to a Florida teenager's suicide, according to court filings on Wednesday.

The settlements cover lawsuits filed in Florida, Colorado, New York, and Texas, according to the legal filings, though they still require finalization and court approval.

"Parties have agreed to a mediated settlement in principle to resolve all claims between them," the Florida filing stated.

The terms of the settlement were not disclosed. The cases include one from Megan Garcia, whose 14-year-old son Sewell Setzer Jr. took his own life in February 2024.

Garcia's lawsuit alleged her son became emotionally dependent on a *Game of Thrones*-inspired chatbot on Character.AI, a platform that allows users to interact with fictional characters.

Setzer's death was the first in a series of reported suicides linked to AI chatbots that emerged last year, prompting scrutiny of ChatGPT-maker OpenAI and other artificial intelligence companies over child safety.

Google was connected to the case through a $2.7 billion licensing deal it agreed to in 2024 with Character.AI.

The tech giant also hired Character.AI founders Noam Shazeer and Daniel De Freitas — both former Google employees who rejoined the tech giant as part of that deal. A spokesperson for Character.AI declined to comment.—AFP

Syria bombs Kurdish areas in Aleppo

Kurds protest in Turkiye against offensive

ALEPPO/DIYARBAKIR: Syria's military heavily bombed Kurdish neighbourhoods in Aleppo on a third day of fighting as Syrian Kurdish leader Mazloum Abdi warned the violence undermined talks with Damascus.

The government and Kurdish forces have traded blame over who started the fighting on Tuesday, which comes as implementation stalls on a deal to merge the Kurds' administration and military in the northeast into the new government.

The worst violence in Aleppo since Syria's Islamist authorities took power has also highlighted regional tensions between Turkiye, which says it is ready to support Syria's authorities, and Israel, which condemned what it described as attacks against the Kurds.

"We've gone through very difficult times... my children were terrified," said Rana Issa, 43, whose family fled Aleppo's Ashrafiyeh neighbourhood under sniper fire.

"Many people want to leave," but are afraid of the shooters, she said.

State television, citing a civil defence official, said some 16,000 people had fled the Kurdish-majority Sheikh Maqsud and Ashrafiyeh neighbourhoods on Thursday, with at least 17 people dead over three days, according to government and Kurdish force figures.

Abdi — who leads the US-backed, Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) — said attacks on Kurdish areas "during the negotiation process undermine the chances of reaching understandings".

Kurds protest in Turkiye

Several hundred people demonstrated Thursday in Diyarbakir, southeastern Turkiye's Kurdish-majority main city, to protest against the Syrian army's offensive against Kurdish fighters in Aleppo, correspondents reported.

The demonstrators called for "resistance" while marking the third day of deadly clashes in the northern Syrian city.

"We urge states to act as they did for the Palestinian people, for our Kurdish brothers who are suffering oppression and hardship," Zeki Alacabey, a 64-year-old pensioner, said.—AFP

PEOPLE carry their belongings as they flee Aleppo's Ashrafieh neighbourhood.—AFP

Israeli attacks in Gaza kill four children, three others

Tel Aviv bars some aid workers as groups face suspension

GAZA CITY/GENEVA: Gaza's civil defence agency said Israeli attacks in the Palestinian territory on Thursday killed seven people, including four children, despite a ceasefire that has largely halted the fighting.

Four people, including three children, were killed when a drone struck a tent sheltering displaced people in southern Gaza, agency spokesman Mahmud Bassal said.

In the north of the Gaza Strip, an 11-year-old girl was killed near the Jabalia refugee camp, and a strike on a school killed one person, while a drone near Khan Yunis in the south killed a man, the agency added.

When asked, the Israeli military said it was checking the reports.

Earlier on Thursday, the military said a projectile was launched "from the area of Gaza City toward the State of Israel" but that it fell within the Gaza Strip.

"Shortly after, the (military) precisely struck the launch point," it said in a statement.

Since October 10, a fragile US-sponsored truce in Gaza has largely halted the fighting between Israeli forces and Hamas, but both sides have alleged frequent ceasefire violations.

Israeli forces have killed at least 425 Palestinians in Gaza since the ceasefire took effect, according to Gaza's health ministry.

The Israeli military said militants have killed three of its soldiers during the same period.

Israel bars aid workers

Israel said on Thursday it had barred the entry to Gaza of foreign medical and humanitarian staff whose organisations were ordered to cease operations unless they register employee details with Israeli authorities and meet other new rules.

Fearing a renewed humanitarian crisis if medical and aid services can suddenly no longer access shattered Gaza, some of the 37 international nongovernmental organisations that were ordered to halt work are weighing whether to submit staff names to Israeli authorities, two aid sources said.

Three of the aid groups said their foreign staff were told by Israeli authorities this week that they could not enter Gaza.

Israel's diaspora ministry, which manages the registration process, says the measures are meant to prevent diversions of aid by Palestinian armed groups. NGOs say sharing staff details poses too much of a risk, pointing to the hundreds of aid workers who were killed or injured during the two-year Gaza conflict.

Israel has shared little evidence of aid being diverted in the Palestinian enclave, an allegation that was disputed in a US government analysis.

The diaspora ministry said that while the NGOs had been granted 60 days to conclude operations, "the entry of foreign personnel into Gaza is not approved".

It said international staff with "approved organisations", including the United Nations, could continue work as usual.

Three prominent global NGOs — Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF), Medecins du Monde Suisse, and the Danish Refugee Council — said their international staff were refused entry to Gaza this week. Foreign aid staff had generally been permitted to rotate in and out of Gaza since the start of the conflict.

Some of the 37 banned groups operate specialised services like field hospitals, aid officials say. MSF bolsters six Gaza health ministry hospitals and runs two field hospitals. The Medicos del Mundo NGO screens Gaza residents for malnutrition and provides mental health services.

"Without nutritional staff doing the screening and primary healthcare centres doing the therapeutic feeding and referral of patients with severe malnutrition to in-patient care, the whole system breaks down," an aid source said.—Agencies

Dialogue not possible

Continued from Page 1

stands against terrorism.

"Any claim that the PTI government in KP has failed to act in the fight against terrorism is nothing but a grave and outright lie," PTI interim chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan said, adding that it was inappropriate to suggest PTI was not among those targeted by terrorists.

Asad Qaiser emphasised that decision-making concerning KP must involve the province. He stressed that blaming the party for the outcomes of flawed policies was unacceptable. He also pointed out that IDPs displaced during the Gen Musharraf era still await resettlement.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr Raja said, "Protecting the country's borders is the sole mandate of our security forces, not political parties." "If terrorists are crossing into Pakistan, the blame cannot and must not be placed on PTI," he emphasised, rejecting attempts to politicise national security.

Russia releases French researcher in prisoner exchange

MOSCOW: Russia said Thursday it had freed French researcher Laurent Vinatier in a prisoner exchange, more than 18 months after arresting him on suspicion of violating "foreign agent" laws that Paris had denounced as abhorrent.

He was released in exchange for 26-year-old basketball player Daniil Kasatkin, arrested by French authorities last June on US hacking charges, Russia's FSB said.

"Our compatriot Laurent Vinatier is free and back in France," President Emmanuel Macron wrote on X. "I share the relief felt by his family and loved ones." Vinatier was arrested in Russia in June 2024 while gathering what prosecutors said was information about Russia's military activities.

He was later sentenced to three years for failing to register as a "foreign agent", and faced new spying charges that could have seen him sentenced to up to 20 years in jail.

The Kremlin announced last month it had made an offer to France regarding Vinatier — who was working for a Swiss conflict-mediation NGO at the time of his arrest — raising hopes he could be freed.

Russian state TV outlets published a video of a smiling Vinatier being released from jail, dressed in black and with a large black holdall. He was later seen boarding an aircraft.

He arrived in Paris on Thursday, a diplomatic source said.

Russia's FSB said Vinatier had been "pardoned" by presidential decree.

Western countries have long accused Russia of arresting their citizens to use as bargaining chips to secure the release of alleged Russian spies and cyber criminals jailed in Europe and the United States.

Kasatkin, whom France released in the deal, was arrested last year at a Paris airport at the request of the United States.—AFP

Russia opposes Western peace plan for Ukraine

MOSCOW: Russia on Thursday slammed a plan for European peacekeepers to be deployed to Ukraine as "dangerous", branding Kyiv and its allies an "axis of war" and dousing hopes it could be a step towards ending the almost four-year-long war.

US President Donald Trump has been pushing the warring sides to strike a deal to halt the conflict, running shuttle diplomacy between Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky and Russia's Vladimir Putin to try to get an agreement across the line.

An initial 28-point plan that largely adhered to Moscow's demands was criticised by Kyiv and Europe. Now, Russia has condemned attempts to beef up protections for Ukraine should an elusive deal be reached.

Ukraine's allies said they had agreed on key security guarantees for Kyiv at a summit in Paris earlier this week, including a peacekeeping force.

But in its first comments since the summit, Moscow said the statements were far from anything the Kremlin could accept to end its assault.

"The new militarist declarations of the so-called Coalition of the Willing and the Kyiv regime together form a genuine 'axis of war'," Russia's foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said in a statement.

The plans drafted by Kyiv's allies were "dangerous" and "destructive", she added.

The remarks came as Russian strikes plunged hundreds of thousands in Ukraine into darkness and killed three in a frontline city — attacks that Zelensky said showed Russia was still set on war.

Moscow rejects Nato presence

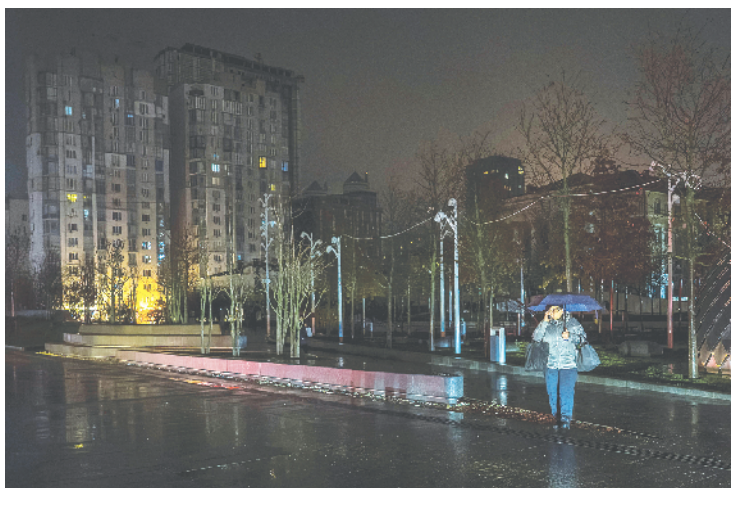
European leaders and US envoys announced earlier this week that post-war guarantees for Ukraine would include a US-led monitoring mechanism and a European multinational force to be deployed once the fighting stops.

But Moscow has repeatedly warned that it would not accept any Nato members sending peacekeeping troops to Ukraine.

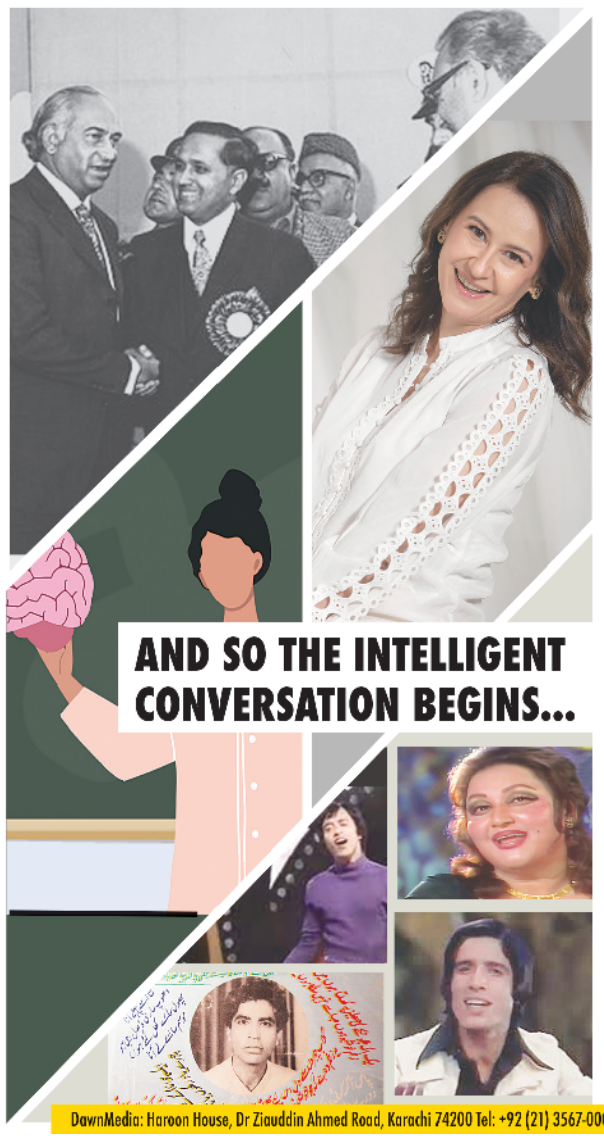
"All such units and facilities will be considered legitimate military targets for the Russian Armed Forces," Zakharova said on Thursday, repeating a threat previously uttered by Putin.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz on Thursday said a ceasefire in Ukraine was still "quite far" away, given Russia's position.

"The order must be: First, a ceasefire, then security guarantees for Ukraine for a long-term agreement with Russia," Merz told reporters.—AFP



A RESIDENT crosses a street during a power blackout in Ukraine after civil infrastructure was hit by Russian missile and drone attacks.—Reuters



THIS SUNDAY'S HIGHLIGHTS:

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PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIETY. CULTURE. IDEAS.

COVER: PAKISTAN'S WINDING ROAD TO THE BOMB
In January 1972, at a secret meeting, Pakistan's top scientists were tasked by President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto with one objective: build an atomic bomb, no matter the cost. At the heart of this endeavour was Bhutto's handpicked nuclear expert, Munir Ahmad Khan. In *Beyond the Bomb: Munir Ahmad Khan and Pakistan's Nuclear Odyssey*, **Farhatullah Babar** details the story of the unsung architect of Pakistan's atomic programme. *Eos* presents, with permission, excerpts from the book...

EDUCATION: EDUCATING PAKISTAN IN THE AI AGE
Pakistan is caught between two starkly different worlds – the age of artificial intelligence and rapid technological advancements on the one hand, and severe resource limitations on the other. Can its youth ever hope to catch up?

IN MEMORIAM: MAMA QADEER
After his son's enforced disappearance in 2009, then nearly 70-year-old Abdul Qadeer Reki did what few dared: he set up a protest camp and never left, until this past December

BOOKS&AUTHORS: Amber Romasa Nagori's *Tales of Agnimitra and Tamana*, Saheeb Ahmed Kayani's *Sarang: History of Gakkhars*, and Iqbal Khursheed's *Chinal Aur Deegar Afsanay*; ALSO: Musharraf Ali Farooqi on Shamsur Rahman Faruqi

PLUS: Nadeem F. Paracha on Releasing Social Pressure, Moni Mohsin's Diary of a Social Butterfly, New Hopes and Old Fears in Pak Women's Football, Manohar Das and Madonna, Waseem Ahmed's 'Perceptual Mirage', Dr Khwaja Ali Shahid's Gardening, Auntie Agni and Static Cling

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THE ICON INTERVIEW: ARJUMAND RAHIM
The veteran TV actress is passionate about her work, especially when it comes to making sure scripts make sense, choosing the right character to play and even putting together the right wardrobe for it. But she is also candid about the many challenges in her line of work. So why is she still looking for excitement?

IN MEMORIAM: MUHAMMAD NASIR
The lyricist who passed away November 6, penned some of the most beloved songs across generations, defining an era for Pakistani music in general and Pakistan Television in particular

PLUS: Reviews of *Anaconda* and *The Housemaid*, The 'Video Jokers' of Uganda, Reality TV's Carbon Footprint, The Grapevine, The Tube and Spotify's Top Pakistani Music

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DawnMedia: Haroon House, Dr Ziauddin Ahmed Road, Karachi 74200 Tel: +92 (21) 3567-0001 Fax: +92 (21) 3568-3801 E-mail: mktg@dawn.com Website: images.dawn.com